

U.S. Patent Application No. 09/824,621
Response to the Advisory Action mailed on February 6, 2006

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This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (Currently amended): Apparatus for remotely selectively controlling access to a plurality of physical areas of a gaming machine, the apparatus comprising:

a plurality of plural, electrically operable lock mechanisms, each respectively associated with one of the plurality of plural, physical areas of the gaming machine and each lock mechanism physically movable between unlocked and locked conditions with respect to its associated area;

control circuitry independent of the gaming machine, said control circuitry including a processor operating under control of a stored program and coupled to each of the lock mechanisms via a communications link for controlling operation thereof;

a data storage and retrieval system adapted to communicate with the processor and including a storage medium for storing data including personnel identification data and access authorization data indicative of the areas, if any, of the machine for which a person seeking access to the machine is authorized; and

a data input device connected to the gaming machine, said data input device coupled to the processor for inputting at least personnel identification data identifying a person seeking access to an area of the machine,

the processor being responsive to input personnel identification data for operating one or more lock mechanisms in accordance with access authorization corresponding to an identified person, said storage media storing personnel identification data that authorizes access by certain, identified personnel to some, but not all, of said plurality of physical areas, the processor causing the lock mechanisms of

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the physical areas to which access is authorized to move to the unlocked position to
allow access to those physical areas.

Claim 2 (Original): The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the data input device includes a keypad.

Claim 3 (Original): The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the data input device includes a card reader, the data storage and retrieval system including a personal data card assigned to a person seeking access to the machine and readable by the card reader.

Claim 4 (Original): The apparatus of claim 3, wherein the data input device further includes a keypad.

Claim 5 (Original): The apparatus of claim 1, and further comprising one or more doors respectively associated with one or more areas and respectively provided with lock mechanisms, each door being movable between open and closed conditions.

Claim 6 (Original): The apparatus of claim 5, wherein each lock mechanism directly controls access to its associated area.

Claim 7 (Original): The apparatus of claim 5, wherein each door includes a manual latch, the lock mechanism for a door indirectly controlling access to the associated area by controlling enablement and disablement of the manual latch.

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Claim 8 (Original): The apparatus of claim 5, and further comprising sensing apparatus for sensing the condition of each door and each lock mechanism.

Claim 9 (Cancelled).

Claim 10 (Original): The apparatus of claim 1, wherein at least one area includes a switch, the associated lock mechanism enabling and disabling the switch.

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Claim 11 (Withdrawn): Apparatus for selectively controlling access to a plurality of physical areas of each of a plurality of gaming machines, the apparatus comprising:

plural electrically operable lock mechanisms, each respectively associated with one of the areas of the machines and each physically movable between unlocked and locked conditions with respect to its associated area,

each machine having a local processor coupled to each of its lock mechanisms and a local data storage and retrieval device coupled to the local processor for storing a program for controlling the local processor,

a host computer in data communication with each of the local processors,

a host data storage and retrieval device storing a host program for controlling the host computer and a database including data relating to the identifications of all authorized personnel and the area or areas of each machine for which each person is authorized access,

input/output apparatus coupled to the host computer, and

local data input devices respectively coupled to the local processors for inputting at least personnel identification data identifying a person seeking access to the associated machine,

each local processor being responsive to input personnel identification data for communicating it to the host computer for comparison with the database and being responsive to signals from the host computer for operating one or more of its lock mechanisms in accordance with access authorization corresponding to an identified person, said host program and database including authorized personnel identification data that authorizes access by certain identified personnel to some, but not all, of said plurality of physical areas.

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Claim 12 (Withdrawn): The apparatus of claim 11, and further comprising one or more doors respectively associated with one or more areas and respectively provided with lock mechanisms, each door being movable between open and closed conditions.

Claim 13 (Withdrawn): The apparatus of claim 11, wherein each machine includes monitoring apparatus for monitoring the conditions of all of its doors and lock mechanisms.

Claim 14 (Withdrawn): The apparatus of claim 13, wherein each of the local programs includes a routine for communicating the conditions of the machine's doors and lock mechanisms to the host computer.

Claim 15 (Withdrawn): The apparatus of claim 14, wherein the input/output apparatus includes a display device for displaying local conditions at each machine.

Claim 16 (Withdrawn): The apparatus of claim 11, wherein each machine includes a plurality of lock processors coupled to the local processor and each associated with a lock mechanism for controlling and monitoring operation thereof.

Claims 17-31 (Cancelled)

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Claim 32 (Currently amended): A method of remotely selectively controlling access to a plurality of different, physical areas of a gaming machine, the method comprising:

providing each area with an electrically operable lock mechanism which is physically movable between unlocked and locked conditions with respect to the area;

storing data including personnel identification data and access authorization data indicative of the particular areas, if any, of the machine for which a person seeking access to the machine is authorized;

controlling the operation of the lock mechanisms via a processor independent of the gaming machine, said processor being coupled to each lock mechanism;

inputting at the machine at least personnel identification information identifying a person seeking access to the machine at the time access is sought; and

remotely, electrically unlocking the lock mechanism of only those physical areas, less than all of said physical areas, for which the person seeking access is authorized.

Claim 33 (Original): The method of claim 32, wherein at least a portion of the data is stored on a personal data card assigned to a person seeking access to the machine, the inputting step including reading data from the personal data card at the machine.

Claim 34 (Original): The method of claim 32, and further comprising controlling the lock mechanisms from a remote location.

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Claim 35 (Original): The method of claim 32, and further comprising providing one or more areas with doors movable between open and closed conditions and respectively provided with lock mechanisms, and monitoring the condition of each door and each lock mechanism and providing an indication thereof.

Claim 36 (Original): The method of claim 32, and further comprising providing a manual override key for each lock mechanism and providing an indication when a lock mechanism has been manually operated.